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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5898
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RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUYNAAAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA PRIORITY
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INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 2268
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 4693
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 1325
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 3050
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 5866
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 5183
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USTR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;
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PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR

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TAGS: OITP KMDR KPAO JA

SUBJECT: TOKYO MEDIA REACTION - AFGHANISTAN HOSTAGE
SITUATION

LEAD STORIES: Friday morning's Asahi and Mainichi ran the results of their latest nationwide opinion surveys, each showing that the main opposition DPJ is cruising toward a major victory in Sunday's Upper House election.

¶1. "Taliban's Indiscriminate Brutality" The business-oriented Nihon Keizai editorialized (7/27): "The Taliban have executed one of the 23 South Korean hostages that the group has been holding. The Koreans had entered the country on a relief mission. This is yet another example of the Taliban's indiscriminate terrorist acts.... Recently, a senior Taliban official clearly told a British TV network that the group intends to kidnap any foreigners in the country and exchange them for Taliban fighters held by US and other NATO forces. Assistance from international organizations and foreign countries is indispensable for Afghanistan, which is still trying to recover, with NGO groups from many countries rushing to the country on relief missions. Important though these missions may be, members of NGOs should be aware that Afghanistan is still a very dangerous place."

¶2. "Don't Harm Innocent People" An editorial in the liberal Mainichi commented (7/27): "Is it considered just under Islam to kidnap defenseless foreigners and execute them if demands made of their governments are not met? This idea will not fly anywhere. The Taliban have executed a South Korean pastor who was among a 23-member South Korean relief mission. The number of

captives is now 22. Though the South Korean government plans to send a special envoy to Afghanistan to resolve the matter, the situation remains volatile.... Should the hostage situation drag out or the Taliban further harm their captives, this will only tarnish the reputation of Muslim people as a whole. The Taliban should immediately and unconditionally release all the hostages...."

SCHIEFFER